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REMARKS

Claims 1-13, 17-20, and 45-48 are pending herein.

I. The specification has been respectfully amended.

Applicants respectfully thank the Examiner for his suggestions, which have been implemented.

II. Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a).

The USPTO respectfully rejects claims 1, 4, 9-11, 17-20 and 45-48 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Goodale et al. (US 5,125,075) in view of Tsuji et al. (US 6,047,315). Claims 1, 45, and 48 are independent claims:

A. The cited references do not teach or suggest a workflow system structured to take one of the specifically claimed actions when a circulation client is incapable of circulation, as claimed in claim 1.

Claim 1 claims in relevant part:

“wherein when the next one of plurality of circulation clients is incapable of circulation, said transmission client or one of said plurality of circulation clients, having sent said document file and said circulation information file to said next one of said plurality of circulation clients being incapable of circulation, conducts at least one of (1) notifying incapability of circulation by said next one of said plurality of circulation clients to other ones of said plurality of circulation clients or said transmission client, (2) sending said document file and said circulation information file to other one of said plurality of circulation clients next to said next one of said plurality of circulation clients, (3) sending said document file and said circulation information file to a proxy client of said next one of said plurality of circulation clients.” (emphasis added)

No new matter is introduced by the amendments. Support for the amendments can be found on page 19 of the present specification. Regarding these limitations, it is respectfully not seen where the cited references teach or suggest the claimed structure quoted above.

Specifically, the USPTO respectfully admits on pages 4-5 of the Office Action that Goodale does not teach the specifically claimed structure quoted above. The USPTO

respectfully attempts to overcome this deficiency in Goodale by citing column 5, lines 11-26 of Tsuji.

However, Tsuji only allegedly teaches that a control information unit notifies the original sender when conditions are unsatisfied (see column 5, lines 23-26). Even assuming *arguendo* that this is true, sending a notification based on unsatisfied conditions is respectfully different than taking one of the specifically claimed actions of claim 1 when a circulation client is incapable of circulation. Specifically, the Tsuji reference focuses on whether a message's recipient takes actions to satisfy a condition. In contrast, the system of claim 1 focuses on whether the circulation client itself is capable or incapable of circulation.

For example in Tsuji, if the message recipient misses a deadline for a response, the system in Tsuji would still make a notification of unsatisfied conditions, even if the client itself were still capable of circulation. On the other hand, the system of claim 1 will only take one of the specifically claimed actions if the circulation client is incapable of circulation, regardless of whether the message recipient has satisfied any conditions.

Furthermore, it is respectfully important to note that Tsuji does not appear to teach or suggest anything about determining whether a circulation client itself is incapable of circulation. Therefore, it respectfully follows that Tsuji cannot teach or suggest a system structured to take one of the specifically claimed actions when a circulation client is incapable of circulation, as claimed in claim 1.

In contrast, present Figure 3 illustrates one possible embodiment of the claimed structure quoted above. Specifically, as noted on page 19 of the present specification, disabled circulation report processor 21 specifies a destination to which a report is sent when the transmission of a file fails to terminate correctly (i.e., when a circulation client is incapable of circulation). Additionally, as noted on pages 19-20 of the present specification, selection/transmission processor 22 specifies a proxy client 2 when the transmission of the file fails to terminate correctly. Thus, present Figure 3 illustrates one possible embodiment of a workflow system structured to take a specifically claimed action when a client is incapable of circulation, as claimed in claim 1.

Thus, it is respectfully asserted that the cited references, taken either alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest all the claimed limitations of claim 1. Therefore, it is respectfully asserted that claim 1 is not obvious over the cited references.

B. The cited references do not teach or suggest taking one of the specifically claimed actions if it is determined that the next destination is incapable of circulation, as claimed in claim 45.

Regarding the limitations of claim 45 that claim in relevant part:

“(3) carrying out at least one of the following steps, if it is determined that the next destination is incapable of circulation:

(3-1) sending the document to at least one of the successive destination and a proxy of the next destination; and

(3-2) sending a report to at least one of an originator of the circulation and destinations of the circulation a fact that the next destination is incapable circulation.” (emphasis added)

it is respectfully not seen where the cited references teach or suggest the claimed method quoted above.

Specifically, as noted above, it is respectfully asserted that neither Goodale nor Tsuij teach or suggest determining if a circulation client is incapable of circulation. Thus, it respectfully follows that neither Goodale nor Tsuij can teach or suggest carrying out one of the specifically claimed steps if it is determined that the next destination (i.e. a circulation client) is incapable of circulation, as claimed in claim 45.

Thus, it is respectfully asserted that the cited references, taken either alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest all the claimed limitations of claim 45. Therefore, it is respectfully asserted that claim 45 is not obvious over the cited references.

C. The cited references do not teach or suggest determining if a first one of the destinations to which the computer is to send the document is capable of circulating the document to a second one of the destinations, as claimed in claim 48.

Regarding the limitations of claim 48 that claim in relevant part:

“determining if a first one of the destinations to which the computer is to send the document is capable of circulating the document to a second one of the destinations.” (emphasis added)

it is respectfully not seen where the cited references teach or suggest the claimed method quoted above.

Specifically, as noted above, it is respectfully asserted that neither Goodale nor Tsuji teach or suggest determining if a circulation client is incapable of circulation. Thus, it is respectfully asserted that the cited references, taken either alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest all the claimed limitations of claim 48. Therefore, it is respectfully asserted that claim 48 is not obvious over the cited references.

D. Further explanation.

Applicants respectfully note the following additional explanation regarding the Goodale and Tsuji references.

Claim 1 claims that when the next one of the plurality of circulation clients is incapable of circulation, at least one of the specifically claimed countermeasures are conducted by said transmission client or one of said plurality of circulation clients having sent the document file. Therefore, document circulation can be continued without suspension or fail.

As the USPTO respectfully admits, Goodale does not teach this specific limitation. Additionally, Goodale teaches in column 4, lines 49-52 that the invention ensures that the route package is properly processed by a recipient according to the respective specified options, and is sent to the next listed recipient. Specifically, Goodale teaches away from a sender to send the route package to clients other than the next client. In other words, Goodale teaches away from a sender conducting the specifically claimed countermeasures (1) to (3) of claim 1.

Furthermore, regarding the Tsuji reference, Tsuji teaches with reference to Figures 3 and 7 that the control unit can search for unsatisfied conditions and indicate the unsatisfied conditions as the reason why the mail is not processed. As shown in Figure 3 of Tsuji, the reason is indicated on the display 44 of the recipient so as to guide the recipient to send a mail

(see column 4, lines 64-67). It respectfully appears that Tsuji does not teach anything about the structure of the system claimed in claim 1.

Additionally, as is the case in Goodale, Tsuji also ensures that a mail is properly processed by a recipient according to the respective specified options and is sent to the next listed recipient.

Accordingly, even combining Goodale and Tsuji, the cited references do not teach or suggest conducting one of the specifically claimed countermeasures of claim 1 when the circulation client is incapable of circulation. Furthermore, neither Goodale nor Tsuji teaches or suggests the problem of a circulation client being incapable of circulation; thus the cited references do not teach the effect of the system claimed in claim 1 wherein the document circulation can be continued without suspension or fail.

III. The dependent claims.

As noted above, it is respectfully asserted that independent claims 1 and 45 are allowable, and therefore it is further respectfully asserted that dependent claims 2-13, 17-20, and 45-47 are also allowable.

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IV. Conclusion.

Reconsideration and allowance of all of the claims is respectfully requested.

If there are any additional charges with respect to this Amendment or otherwise, please charge them to Deposit Account No. 06-1130.

Please contact the undersigned for any reason. Applicants seek to cooperate with the Examiner including via telephone if convenient for the Examiner.

Respectfully submitted,

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